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GATEWAY GRADS EXTEND DEBRIEFING

An interview with Larry Baile

On the road between Columbus, Ohio, and Ridgecrest, California, Larry Baile examined an idea that had first occurred to him earlier that week as he listened to Bob Monroe talk about the importance of staying in touch with each other. It was May 1991 and Larry was returning from Virginia after his GATEWAY VOYAGE® at The Monroe Institute. By the time he arrived home, stepped through his front door, and dropped his luggage, Larry was committed to nurturing communication among his, by then, far-flung group of fellow GATEWAY graduates.

In an interview with the FOCUS Larry talked about his commitment, the labor of love he undertook to materialize it, and the successful results—the Gateway Voyager DeBriefer.

FOCUS: First of all, Larry, what is the *DeBriefer* and how did it get its name?

LARRY: It's an interactive sort of monthly newsletter. Each issue includes questions and comments from anyone in our *GATEWAY VOYAGE* group. Then, in the next issue, whatever answers I have received are published. I think of it as a continuation of the debriefing sessions we had after each tape exercise during the *GATEWAY*—that exchange of experiences we shared as a group.

FOCUS: Obviously, that continuation is important to you. Can you describe why, after having spent only six days with a group of relative strangers, you felt so strongly about maintaining that connection?

LARRY: From the first day of the program a quiet transition began to take place. We arose at dawn and worked hard all day and late into the night. We never knew what time it was nor did we seem to care. Each new tape exercise and the debriefing session following it brought deeper insights and understanding of the others. Our group of strangers began to meld into a unified whole. I remember thinking, "I have become so close to these people it's going to be sad when the time is over."

Eventually it did end, of course, but there was not the great feeling of sadness I had expected. Rather, it was like a temporary going apart—a feeling of "I'll see you later." On my way back to California, I organized my impressions and impulses into a preliminary plan.

FOCUS: You've been publishing the *DeBriefer* for well over a year now. Is it working? Has the project met your expectations?

LARRY: Yes, it's working. And I think it has exceeded my expectations in many ways. When I initiated the *DeBriefer* I had some questions about my own post-GATEWAY experiences and was hoping to find answers through dialogue in the newsletter. That occurred, but even more significant is that our discussions also led to sharing other, often quite profound, experiences, which stimulated further interaction among the group. So, yes, I would say that it is working well.

FOCUS: Are all the members of your GATEWAY group participating?

LARRY: Yes. I have received written correspondence from every member except one. If I haven't heard from someone in several months, I'll usually give them a call and take notes on our telephone conversation. These end up in the *DeBriefer* as phone correspondence. Ideally, I'll receive four to six pieces of correspondence per month for an interesting issue of about four pages. Some members participate more than others, but the mix is pretty good. If everyone wrote every month I would be overwhelmed with correspondence.

FOCUS: The nature of the GATEWAY programs is that they are attended by people throughout the country and worldwide. As a result, the *DeBriefer* is in good company among several other postprogram newsletters designed to serve the same purpose—to help maintain the deep connections established within their groups. Another element common to each newsletter is a devoted, enthusiastic, hardworking editor/publisher. What does it actually take, Larry, to put together an issue?

LARRY: How many hours do I generally spend compiling, editing, entering, writing, printing, mailing, etc.? In the beginning, as I was still getting organized, it took about twenty hours. It was truly a labor of love. As the *DeBriefer* evolved, the masthead was developed. Each issue has a theme. Once the newsletters are collated, stacked, and ready to mail, and the envelopes are all addressed, I pick up each *DeBriefer*, think about who it's going to, and write a personal P.S. This makes me feel that I am in touch with that person spiritually. The entire process takes less time now as I've become more efficient. Finally, to give the *DeBriefer* a unique look, I create envelope art by hand with marking pens. This way, it doesn't get identified as junk mail and inadvertently thrown out.

FOCUS: The *DeBriefer* has certainly fulfilled its purpose of continuing the deeply personal level of communication established during the GATEWAY VOYAGE.

What's more, your group has maintained its connection over time. Looking ahead, what are your hopes and dreams for the *DeBriefer*?

LARRY: I would like to see a better response to the "Focus Projects" we do. These are group exercises, done in the various Focus levels, which are scheduled so that everyone can

participate simultaneously. We're getting there, but I need to make it easier for everyone to respond to me in a way that allows the feedback to be correlated.

FOCUS: Larry, thank you for giving our readers a "publisher's eye view" of an obviously effective postprogram newsletter. Before we close, is there any last comment you'd like to offer on your experience?

LARRY: I want to sum up on this note: Support! Support! Support! I have received overwhelming support from all of the members of the group. Support has come in the form of letters, telephone conversations, donations for stamps and envelopes, and computer software. Perhaps the greatest support is from all the members of our *GATEWAY* group who let me know the *DeBriefer* is appreciated. That makes it all worthwhile!

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